Netwatch

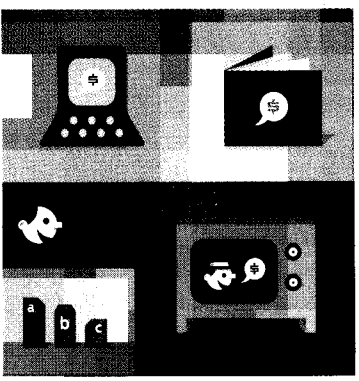
By Jim Carroll

Your guide to business & accounting on the Internet

Specialist search

On occasion chartered accountants need help dealing with an asset valuation, assessment of a transaction or some other complex issue. In such cases, it is not unusual to retain a topic expert. While it might have been difficult in the past to find an expert on a particular topic, that's no longer the case. There are numerous online databases that provide access to listings of experts in various fields, as well as other methods to seek out such know-how.

One of the most established Canadian "expert sites" is *Sources*, a free directory within the news industry. The printed version is sent to newsrooms across the country annually and includes details on individuals and companies that claim expertise in particular topics, and are willing to pay to be listed. There is no guarantee as to their knowledge (some of the so-called experts are simply corporate public relation flacks), but this can still be a useful starting point for your search.



Fortunately, *Sources*' entire directory is now online, so you can do a search by topic. A similar Canadian service, Media Link, also contains an online search service.

The US equivalent to this service is ProfNet, but access is restricted to journalists. However, there are numerous other US sites that let you search for experts — we are talking about the land of litigation, after all. These include ExpertWitness, MedExpert, the Expert Pages and National Directory of Expert Witnesses. Some services are less comprehensive than others, but they're all worth while as additional sources.

Another approach is to find the association or group that represents a particular specialized topic or area and use it to locate an expert in that field. To do so, visit Micromedia, which features a searchable association directory, a great way to find what you're looking for quickly. For the US, try the American Society of Association Executives site.

Last but not least, use university websites to find academics and researchers on specific topics. A great starting point is Journalismnet.com (www.journalismnet.com/experts/canada.htm# university), which provides direct links to several expert search databases at major Canadian universities, as well as access to a listing of experts at Canadian think-tanks and lobby groups.

Of course, while the Internet can lead you to purported experts, it's up to you to get their qualifications and make sure they're up to the task at hand.

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EXPERTS ONLINE

Sources www.sources.com

Media Link www.medialink.ca

JournalismNet expert page
www.journalismnet.com/experts

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Expert Pages
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National Directory of Expert Witnesses
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Micromedia
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American Society of Association Executives
http://info.asaenet.org/gateway/OnlineAssocSlist.html